

THE SPEECH

OF

THOMAS J. RANDOLPH,

(OF ALBEMARLE,)

IN THE

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA,

ON THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY:

Delivered Saturday, Jan. 21, 1832.

SECOND EDITION.

This second edition of the speech of Mr. Randolph on the Abolition of Slavery, is published by gentlemen favorable to the views which he has advocated.

RICHMOND:

Printed by Thomas W. White, opposite the Bell Tavern.

.....
1832.

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1832.

MR. GOODE of Mecklenburg, rose to move the following resolution :

Resolved, That the select committee raised on the subject of slaves, free negroes, and the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical massacre in Southampton, be discharged from the consideration of all petitions, memorials and resolutions, which have for their object, the manumission of persons held in servitude under the existing laws of this commonwealth, and that it is not expedient to legislate on the subject.

MR. RANDOLPH moved the following substitute to be inserted after the word "Southampton :"

— "be instructed to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the vote of the qualified voters in the several towns, cities, boroughs, and counties of this commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law, that the children of all female slaves, who may be born in this state, on or after the 4th day of July 1840, shall become the property of the commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty-one years, and females at the age of eighteen, if detained by their owners within the limits of Virginia, until they shall respectively arrive at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom, shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal, beyond the limits of the United States, and that said committee have leave to report by bill or otherwise."

MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 1832.

MR. BRODNAX, from the committee on the coloured population, presented the following report :

The select committee, to whom was referred certain memorials, praying the passage of some law providing for the gradual abolition of slavery in the commonwealth, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and have come to the following resolution thereupon :

Resolved as the opinion of this committee, That it is inexpedient for the present legislature to make any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery.

MR. PRESTON moved that the resolution reported from the committee, be amended, by striking out the word "inexpedient," and inserting the word "expedient."

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 1832.

On motion of MR. RANDOLPH of Albemarle, the Report of the committee on slaves, free negroes and mulattoes, and the amendment of MR. PRESTON, were taken up; when MR. RANDOLPH rose and addressed the house as follows:

MR. SPEAKER,

I feel in all its force, the embarrassing circumstances under which I throw myself upon the courtesy of this house. Unprepared by the habits of my life, which have been agricultural and not professional, the little information I possess, having been gathered more from the study of men in the collisions of the business of an active life, than from books. I know, sir, I cannot do justice to the subject under consideration: I feel, that humble as my pretensions are, I cannot do justice to myself; the thoughts which flow in a sufficiently connected train in my closet, the words which occur with sufficient distinctness to express them, all vanish in the presence of a public assemblage, as mist before the sun. It would have been far more agreeable to me, to have been a silent spectator of the debate passing before me; to have witnessed the corruscations of wit, and the shock of argument between the contending champions; but, sir, having entered the lists imprudently, perhaps very imprudently, having received the onset of skilled and talented antagonists, I cannot now retreat with honor, I must defend myself as best I may; believing myself sufficiently honoured to be deemed worthy of the attack of such distinguished gentlemen.

In all the phases and aspects under which this subject has presented itself to the house, I recognize in it but the same thing, viz: the question of the expediency of legislation. The resolution of the gentleman from Mecklenburg, (Mr. Goode,) involved this question; the amendment to it offered by myself, was but the *quo modo* of that legislation; the amendment of the gentleman from Montgomery, (Mr. Preston,) to the report of the committee, expresses it directly. Under this view of the subject, with the leave of the house, I will take a retrospective glance to the arguments used when the former resolution and amendment were under consideration, as applying to the proposition now before us.

I will make a single remark to correct an erroneous impression, which has arisen from an expression used the other day by my friend from Campbell, (Mr. Rives,) "that this was the plan of Mr. Jefferson." It has been understood as conveying the idea that Mr. Jefferson had left a fully developed plan of abolition: this is not the fact. The idea is contained in his published works. I cannot now tell whether I received it from them, or from the impressions of social intercourse, probably from both: the impression has long been deeply imbedded in my mind. If in the resolution there is one suggestion worthy of notice, be the honour to him; whatever is objectionable, be the odium and disgrace upon my head. I should have made this explanation several days since, but consulting with friends more versed in the usages of public bodies, I was advised it would be time enough

when I should address you in my own defence. The gentleman from Petersburg, (Mr. Brown,) said that "this was not the plan of Mr. Jefferson;" this fact will be developed in the course of this debate. My colleague, (Mr. Wood,) said that he did not *know*, that this was the plan of Mr. Jefferson. He might have known, sir, if he had chosen to ask. These expressions tended to convey the idea that there was some concealment; an attempt to foist upon the house a plan bearing the authority of Mr. Jefferson's name, which was not his. I do not believe, sir, my colleague intended to convey this idea.

[Mr. Wood of Albemarle, said he had not intended to convey the idea that his colleague had presented his plan as that of Mr. Jefferson, when it really was not, nor to intimate that his proposition was not in part the plan of Mr. Jefferson. But he had expressed a doubt whether Mr. Jefferson would now present such a plan were he living. It had been far from him to impute to his colleague the intention of deceiving the house, by presenting as Mr. Jefferson's, a plan which was not his.]

MR. RANDOLPH. It will be borne in mind, sir, that the amendment I offered the other day, to the resolution of the member from Mecklenburg, was a resolution of inquiry only; that it pointed simply to a specific object, and necessarily could not have the developments of a bill or report; and many amendments and modifications must of necessity have been adopted, before it could have assumed that shape, in accordance with the developement of my own ideas upon the subject. When resolutions are favourably received, they are usually left to the discretion of the committee, subject to the approval of the house, retaining their generic character to modify them into specific enactments. It has not been the custom, it is not, and from the nature of things, never can be, to submit resolutions of inquiry in the matured and expanded form of bills. This resolution proposed to inquire into the expediency of not allowing slaves, born subsequent to the year 1840, to be retained in the commonwealth, after the females shall attain the age of 18, and the males 21 years; and if retained to be removed by the commonwealth, the expenses of such removal to be remunerated out of the property itself. The master is allowed 18 and 21 years after the birth of each, to remove them, and 28 years are allowed before the first are required to be removed; a period in which, according to the bills of mortality, near three-fourths of the grown persons now living will have died. It in fact operates upon posterity, and not upon the present generation. It levies no money tax upon the people—each slave pays his own removal by his hire. The number exported annually after the year 1861, by their owners or the commonwealth, would amount to four or five per cent. No slave now living, and none born prior to 1840, would be subject to the operation of the law. Emancipation in the state is forbidden, and not a part of the plan. Before they attain respectively the ages of 18 and 21, they may be sold out of the state by their owners, who would pocket the money. Eighty years will be necessary to work their entire extinction; a period sufficiently long for their gradual removal, and the introduction of free labour. If in 1860, the evil is found irremediable, a repeal of the law will place us where we now stand. It is contended, and I agree in the opinion, that they would prefer remaining here

in bondage, to transportation to the coast of Africa, and no insurrectionary movement could be apprehended from the repeal. The legislature are not to act upon this plan until it has received the sanction of the people. It is the people who are interested—it is the people who are exposed to the dangers of its retention, as 5,000 to one compared to this house. They are the best judges of their own interest, and the necessities for the limitation of that interest. I cannot concur in the views of gentlemen who distrust the people; who fear them; and who will not submit to their decision in this matter.—Great reprobation has been thrown upon this plan, because it is said to contain no guarantee for property. The resolution does not prescribe the condition upon which it shall become the property of the commonwealth. Whether by the surrender of such portions as are not removed within the time specified—whether by payment for it at birth, at its full value, or at a reduced average, or such portions of it at this age, as the funds of the commonwealth would justify, to be apportioned in such manner as may be provided by law, to be left with the masters of their mothers until their services shall have paid the expense of rearing, or in any other manner that the wisdom of this house should direct. I appeal to my friend from Goochland to say that these were my opinions expressed to him before any discussion took place on this subject in this body, and that it is not an after thought to elude the force of gentlemen's arguments. To have inserted all these provisions in a resolution to inquire, would not have been warranted by the usages of this house. Gentlemen have chosen to argue upon this resolution as if it were a bill. It was not for me to prescribe the course of their arguments. They have chosen to erect phantoms at which to charge their careering chivalry, and display the force and dexterity with which they could wield their weapons. I could not prohibit them this indulgence. They were members of the committee to whom it was proposed to refer this resolution, and might have moulded it to suit their views. As they have said so much about the property feature, I will take a passing notice of it. I do not concur in the abstract opinions of the gentlemen of the West. I cannot concur with the hopeless, ultra absoluteism of the South. It has been the course of legislation here, to consider slaves as exclusively persons, as exclusively property, or as partaking jointly of both, as the exigencies of the commonwealth have required. Under the constitution of the United States, slaves are deemed persons, degraded, it is true, into two-fifths, but nevertheless as persons, and representation is claimed for them as such. Under several of our laws, they are deemed exclusively persons, inasmuch as the master cannot kill them as he would his oxen; nor can he maim or disfigure them—he cannot give them the ear-marks of his cattle or his sheep. For offences they are tried as persons, and, with the exception of the jury trial, (to which they are not entitled,) can claim of right, and are entitled to counsel to defend them—to all the formalities of law, and all the rules of evidence. In most of our police laws, they are deemed exclusively persons, and for violations of them are punished as such. This, then, having been the approved course of our legislation, the people, through their representatives, have the right to legislate upon them in

this instance, either as persons or property, as their wisdom and the exigencies of the commonwealth shall direct. The gentleman from Dinwiddie, (gen. Broadnax,) denies to the non-slaveholder the right to vote upon this question, yet he admits that this body can decide it. The non-slaveholders, sir, constitute a numerous body of our constituents. He admits the power of the representative, but denies this power to his constituent. This appears to me strange and inconsistent doctrine. He gives to the creature the power that he denies to the creator; to the agent what he denies to the principal; to the servant that power which he denies to the master.

[Gen. Brodnax rose to explain. He had argued that the legislature *was not the creature of the people*, in consequence of the division of political power which was agreed upon by the late convention, by which the preponderancy was given to the East, and it would be a departure from that principle, to submit this subject to the voters of the state.]

MR. RANDOLPH. The gentleman either makes a distinction where there does not exist a difference, or he argues because the people of one portion of the state have acquired more power than the people of another, that the people of the whole state have lost a portion of their rights, a conclusion to which I feel assured my constituents will not be disposed to come. The plan suggested in the amendment is so distant in its operation, that it affects our children and not ourselves. If the children of non-slaveholders, should possess slaves, certainly the non-slaveholder would have an interest in the distant increase of them, and a right to decide any question affecting them by his vote now.— On the contrary, it often happens, that the children of slaveholders do not possess slaves. I, Mr. Speaker, know many instances of this: they would be less interested in the decision than the non-slaveholder. Perhaps the gentleman intends to offer us some law of entail which shall keep these castes perpetually distinct in their descendants. If you deny to the non-slaveholder the right to vote upon this question, in which his property and the lives of his family are interested, is it not just that he should have some sufficient guarantee from his wealthy neighbour, the slaveholder, that his wife and children should not be butchered by his slaves? Suppose, sir, hydrophobia recurred so often in dogs as to produce a sense of insecurity in the people of this commonwealth, the danger of being bitten at any moment while employed in their daily avocations; would the gentleman from Dinwiddie contend that none but dogholders ought to have the right to decide the question, whether the dogs should be destroyed or not? are not the children of the non-dogholder as likely to be bitten and to die of this frightful disease as the family of the dogholder? Yet, sir, you will not allow the non-slaveholder to vote in the decision touching that property whose benefits I acknowledge he does not participate, but in whose inconveniences and perils he has more than his full share. It is well known that it has been the practice, if not the policy of the large slaveholder, to make the poor man the instrument of their police and their punishments to their slaves; which has begotten hostility between the slave and the less wealthy, that makes their condition the most perilous in all insurrectionary movements. The gentleman from Bruns-

wick, (Mr. Shell,) who amused us so much yesterday with his wit and his genius, in converting a grave subject into one of merriment and laughter, admitted that if the public safety required it, if the case of the *salus populi* (safety of the people) existed, this property might be limited. Now, sir, this case of the *salus populi*, although not existing at this moment, may be proven with the accuracy of arithmetical calculation, with the certainty of mathematical demonstration, with all those proofs that bring conviction to the human mind, to exist in a certain future. Let us see the proofs. I will quote, in part, the statistics of the gentleman from Dinwiddie, whose accuracy cannot be questioned. Judging the future by the past, in 40 years the coloured population in Eastern Virginia, will exceed the white 200,000. In the last 40 years, the whites in the same district have increased 51 per cent.: the blacks 186 per cent.: 40 years ago, the whites exceeded the coloured 25,000: the coloured now exceed the whites 81,000; a nett gain of the blacks over the whites in forty years, of 106,000; and these results too, during an exportation of near 260,000 slaves since the year 1790, now perhaps the fruitful progenitors of half a million in other states. By reference to document No. 16 on your table, you will perceive that in the year 1830, of that part of the population of 10 years old and under, the blacks exceed the whites 26 per cent.: over that age only 3 per cent. What a change will not 18 years make for the worse? when these children shall be grown. What will not 40 years, with its geometrical progression evolve, when they shall become fathers and mothers, and some of them grandmothers? If exportation ceases, some of those now within the hearing of my voice, may live to see the coloured population of Virginia 2,000,000 or 2,500,000: children now born may live to see them 3,000,000, determining the increase by their average increase in the United States in the last 40 years. Sir, is not the case of the *salus populi* demonstrated to exist in the certain future? Who will be so hardy as to assert, that when the time arrives, a remedy can be applied: who will say, that 2,000,000 can be attempted to be removed: they will say to you long before that, "we will not go." Here, sir, applies that wise maxim of the law, "*venienti occurrere morbo*," (meet the coming ill.)

The gentleman from Dinwiddie, or some other gentleman, for I have had such an host upon me, that I must be excused if I cannot recollect whence every shot came, argued, that successful insurrection would be impossible; that if the powers of the state were not sufficient to quell it, the United States would inundate the country with her troops. I admit it, sir, but if her intervention is to be waited for, she may probably reclaim a country smoking with the blood of its population.—She may reclaim districts, the titles of whose lands shall have reverted to the commonwealth from the extinction of the heirs of their former proprietors. Be this however as it may, there is one circumstance to which we are to look as inevitable in the fullness of time; a dissolution of this Union. God grant it may not happen in our time, or that of our children; but sir, it must come, sooner or later; and when it does come, border war follows it, as certain as the night follows the day. An enemy upon your frontier offering arms and asylum to this population, tampering with it in your bosom, when your citizens shall

march to repel the invader, their families butchered and their homes desolated in the rear, the spear will fall from the warrior's grasp, his heart may be of steel, but it must quail. Suppose an invasion by your enemy, in part with black troops, speaking the same language, of the same nation, burning with enthusiasm for the liberation of their race; if they are not crushed the moment they put foot upon your soil, they roll forward, an hourly swelling mass; your energies are paralyzed, your power is gone; the morasses of the lowlands, the fastnesses of the mountains, cannot save your wives and your children from destruction. Sir, we cannot war with these disadvantages; peace, ignoble, abject peace; peace upon any conditions that an enemy may offer, must be accepted. Are we then prepared to barter the liberty of our children for slaves for them. Is it not wise policy, while the evil is still within our grasp; when we can gradually obliterate it, with gentle forbearance to all; while we can still restrain it, by the strong hand of power, or crush its movements in blood if necessary, to prepare the way for better prospects to our children, brighter hopes to posterity.

The gentleman has objected to the West deciding this question.—He has again misconstrued the resolution. It is, or intended to be permissive and not obligatory, upon the subsequent legislature. It is to ascertain unequivocally the sense of the people, that this house might be guided by their wishes. No man would desire so great a revolution by a small majority. We have heard enough here, sir, to intimate to us unequivocally, that we must act with a majority whose power shall awe into obedience, any portion of the state, if any such there be, which should prove disloyal. He has objected to the plan as being too deferred in its commencement; others have objected that it commences so soon: this proves that it has the character of moderation, for it strikes the medium between the views of different individuals.

The gentleman from Fauquier, (Mr. Marshall,) has objected because it does not come from the people, and is too exclusive. On all occasions of vital interest, where the prosperity of the commonwealth is endangered, it is the duty of the legislature to take the lead, it is their duty to call public attention to the evil; such was the practice of our ancestors during that war which tore them from the parent stem, and gentlemen have urged, and I agree with them, that this revolution is not less important in its consequences. Attract and concentrate public opinion on the subject; obtain a full, an unquestioned expression of the public will. Members can then act understandingly, advisedly. No member will then fear the misconception of the will of his constituents, his course will be decisive, and no longer doubtful. It will not do to submit an abstract proposition of abolition to the people. Abolition may be to-day, to-morrow, the next year or ten years hence. It may be sudden, convulsing society to its centre, or it may be gradual and harmless; all this they must know, to decide correctly; you must give them the general principles of the plan you intend to pursue; they must see and understand it in all its bearings; weigh its effects upon individual interests, and the general prosperity;

then, sir, they can give you an unequivocal demonstration of that will, which shall be to me, the polar star of my political life.

The gentleman from Brunswick, (Mr. Gliolson,) spoke of the popular voice, when it should be heard among members; he spoke of the meeting held by the citizens of Albemarle on this subject, in derision, comparing it to a Clay meeting, (doubtless in his county.) My colleague too, united to discredit this expression of the opinion of his constituents. He has been abused by his correspondents. I have it from honorable gentlemen who were present, that it was one of the largest ever held in the court house. The meetings at the courts of Albemarle, in a village of near 1500 inhabitants, in the centre of a fertile and populous district, are always large, intelligent and highly respectable. This was presided over by the individual most distinguished for his long public services, and the dignity of the offices he had filled, of any man now among us. He opposed the second resolution, and it was carried by an overwhelming majority, in defiance of his opposition. This resolution was read by my colleague in his place, for the purpose of discrediting it. I yesterday received a letter informing me who had presented this resolution; it was presented by a talented friend, whom I know to concur with me in the plan contained in the resolution I submitted. A number of individuals who were there present had known of this plan and approved it. Among my neighbors, on my recent visit to my home, it was a subject of conversation, and approved, as I understood, by all; they were individuals who owned ten, thirty, fifty, sixty and seventy negroes; many of them earned by a long course of frugal and successful industry.— Little did they or I think of the high evidence of patriotism and generosity they evinced, when they proposed to surrender the *post nati* of these. Honest, generous hearted men, little did they imagine that when this idea was proposed to others, that it should be received with deep and damning reprobation, as a scheme of robbery and plunder. Gentlemen may suppose that I had an influence over these neighbors. No, sir, they were individuals from whom I had been separated by an hereditary feud. I had rarely concurred in opinion, or acted with them. Whatever have been the causes which have separated us, they shall exist on my part no longer. I have learned here to appreciate their virtue and their patriotism, and shall feel myself proud to claim them as friends and neighbors. I do not fear, sir, to meet the public award in the conscientious discharge of my duty. The high minded feelings of the gentleman from Brunswick, teach him that lust of office is not the sole motive of action with an honorable man. My colleague, (Mr. Wood,) has dwelt much upon wild and visionary schemes. He has argued both sides of this question, doubtless for the benefit of the house: he has been the advocate of slavery, and avowed himself the friend of abolition. His arguments appear to me to have been inconsistent. He spoke of the massacre of Southampton as a trifling affair; this he could not have meant; it escaped him in the heat of debate. I can assure the worthy member from Southampton, that he did not mean it; and I will ask him when he shall return to his constituents, to say to them, that the people of Albemarle mourned for them as brethren of the same family; they had our sym-

pathies; our deep commiseration; there was not a bosom which did not heave its sigh; there was not a heart among us that did not feel its thrill of agony at the recital of their sufferings.

The gentleman from Brunswick, (Mr. Gholson,) said that the legislature had even doubted the propriety of submitting the Convention question to the people, when they had the names of 40,000 memorialists on their table, praying it. I have understood the history of that matter differently, sir. The legislature did doubt, but their doubts were solved by their masters, the people; they bade them submit it, and they dare not disobey. It was made a test question at the elections, and gentlemen were not returned here, unless they pledged themselves to vote for its submission. He believed it would be dangerous to attempt to remove this *post nati*, because exportation would be deemed a punishment. These *post nati*, if none had been sent out by their masters, would amount to between four and five per centum per annum. The young ones would be too young to join in rebellion. Those over 21 were not to be removed. Would they rebel because they were not to be punished? Certainly not, sir. He has said, that if this question was submitted to the people, laws would be passed in other states, prohibiting the introduction of our slaves into them. He has ascribed the cause to the effect, the antecedent to the succeeding. These laws have already passed. I hope, sir, they may not be operative. The gentleman from Petersburg, (Mr. Brown,) and the gentleman from Brunswick, have spoken with much exultation of what they are pleased to call the decrease of the ratio of the colored population since 1790. Since 1790, the blacks have increased upon the whites in East Virginia, 106,000. There was a regular increase of the ratio from 1790 to 1820. The ratio is now, in the whole state, one-third of one per cent. less than in 1790; and this has been effected by the revulsion of prices of 1819, which threw thousands of slaves upon the market in the following years, and swept over the land with the devastation of a tornado, uprooting the proudest oaks, and breaking the noblest hearts. May God in his mercies avert a reduction by similar means. The gentleman from Brunswick has said, that when Pennsylvania and the other northern states abolished slavery, the western states were unsettled, and many of them went thither. I think, sir, they abolished by emancipation without expulsion; and blacks never go west, except from a slave to a free state. But Louisiana was not then acquired. A new world has been opened. The regions watered by the arms of the mighty Mississippi—the rival of the Amazons and the La Plata, the Ganges and the Nile, whose sources are unknown, except to the wandering savage and the daring hunter; the destined seats of future empires, unexplored and unpeopled. Here the African will find boundless forests to fell with his forced and reluctant labor. He will find the wide expanse of varied soils to desolate. Here he will pass away from the wasted lands of Virginia, and from a people, whose only curse was to have him thrust upon them.—The maledictions which the gentleman has so glowingly depicted as falling upon my head, I can bear cheerfully with this house. I can share with the people of my native state—with them I can abide through weal and through woe: but when the battle has been fought,

and irrevocably lost, I must bear my children to a land, where, in the current of time, they will not descend to inevitable perdition.

The gentleman from Dinwiddie spoke of the mischievous effects of gentlemen's offering plans, and not being prepared to vote for them. I repel with indignation the inferences of his remark. I repudiate every thing inconsistent with the character of an honorable man. The gentleman distorted my expressions. I explained, I repeated, that I was prepared to vote for the submission of this plan to the people—that I was not prepared, and that I would not vote for any legislative act upon this subject, which was not to be submitted to the people. He repeated his distortion. It was what I had not expected from a fair and courteous adversary—it is what I had least expected from the high character and honorable feelings of the gentleman from Dinwiddie.

[Mr. Brodnax rose to explain. It was singular, he said, that the gentleman should, after having taken a rest of eight days, make an attack upon him in regard to a matter which was fully explained at the time. He had stated, that the gentleman was not prepared to vote on any specific plan, but wished to submit the subject to the people. The gentleman from Albemarle, rose and made an explanation, which placed his opinions in precisely the light in which he (Mr. B.) at first understood them, and he proceeded with his remarks accordingly. It had not entered his mind to impute to the gentleman from Albemarle a dishonorable course of conduct.]

MR. RANDOLPH. Many honorable gentlemen of this house understood my explanation distinctly, and took the same view of this matter that I have done. I felt too indignant under what I conceived the contumely of the gentleman from Dinwiddie, to attempt to correct him a second time, until I should come to it in the regular course of this debate. I have alluded to it now, not from any unkind feelings towards that gentleman, but from a sense of what was due to myself. I feared, from the apologetic strain of his prefatory remarks, that he would depart from the tract of just argument. He reminded me of a certain Trozes Echelle, executioner, I think, sir, to Lewis XI. who always addressed his victims in the kindest and most endearing terms, while he was adjusting upon them the noose which was to launch them into eternity. I would abandon my own views, and become a proselyte to the gentleman's plan, or any other feasible plan to effect this grand object, could my understanding become convinced of its practicability. He levies a tax on the people, of \$200,000 per annum; he proposes to export with this sum, annually, 6,000, being the annual increase of slaves and free negroes. The exportation has averaged 8,500 for the last 20 years. If any check is given to this latter export, we have an increasing population. Under his scheme, I think, sir, the expenditure is too great for the efficiency of the plan. He asks annually from the generosity and patriotism of individuals, these 6,000 young grown slaves of the capital stock of the present effective labor of the country, and he can see nothing wrong in it; yet he views with the most damning opprobrium, my application to the same patriotism and generosity for the *post nati*, those to be born after the year 1840, a thing not now in existence, and not likely to be availa-

ble in our lives. He has spoken of the impolicy of submitting a statute to the people. He ought to have said the general principles of a statute. The people are the best judges of their own interest—They ought to be consulted in matters deeply and vitally interesting to them—There is no danger in them—If he knew them as well as I do, he would not fear them. I have often broken the poor man's bread, and shared his pallet—I have enjoyed his hospitality. There is not a more virtuous, a more just, or kinder hearted people on earth, than what are called the common people of Virginia. I believe them, if not the wisest, the safest depositories of our rights. I prefer myself honest ignorance to interested intelligence. He has expressed his belief, that if Mr. Jefferson had lived, he would have seen this plan of abolition more impracticable now than at the revival after the revolution. He has not lived, sir, to see this revolution in the public mind of Virginia. He has not lived to see a majority of the house of delegates in favor of abolition in the abstract. Sixty-two years ago, when a proposition was made in the legislature of Virginia, by one of the oldest, ablest, and most respected members of that body, to ameliorate (not to abolish slavery, as my friend from Montgomery the other day had supposed) the condition of the slave, who was scarcely known to the law but as property, he was treated with the utmost indecorum, and denounced as an enemy of his country—Now it can be debated here among gentlemen without insult. To those, Mr. Speaker, who have more bile than brain, the softness of whose intellect must be compensated by the hardness of their words, we must allow the few advantages which nature has given them.

The gentleman from Petersburg, (Mr. Brown) stated that "this was not the plan of Mr. Jefferson;" that it was "a vision of his philanthropic mind." It would have been very indelicate in me, sir, to have quoted Mr. Jefferson as authority to this house upon any subject; but when in addition to the talents arrayed against me, and which have pressed upon me so heavily—the weight of his name is to be thrown into the scale to press me down still farther, it becomes my duty to show that his opinions are at least not against me, and that they may be with me. For this purpose, I beg leave to read some extracts from a letter of his which I hold in my hand. "Nursed and educated in the daily habit of seeing the degraded condition, both bodily and mental, of those unfortunate beings—not reflecting that that degradation was very much the work of themselves and their fathers, few minds had yet doubted but that they were as legitimate subjects of property as their horses or cattle." Again, sir: "Your solitary, but welcome voice is the first which has brought this sound to my ear, and I have considered the general silence which prevails on this subject, as indicating an apathy unfavorable to every hope. Yet the hour of emancipation is advancing in the march of time. It will come, and whether brought on by the generous energy of our own minds, or by the bloody process of St. Domingo, excited and conducted by the power of our present enemy, if once stationed permanently within our country, and offering asylum and arms to the oppressed, is a leaf of our history not yet turned over. I hope then, my dear sir, you will reconcile yourself to your country, and its unfortunate condition, that

you will not lessen our stock of sound disposition by withdrawing your portion from the mass. That on the contrary, you will come forward in the public councils, become the missionary of this doctrine, truly Christian, insinuate and inculcate it softly but steadily through the medium of writing and conversation, associate others in your labors, and when the phalanx is formed, bring on and press the proposition perseveringly until its accomplishment. It is an encouraging observation that no good measure was ever proposed, which, if duly pursued, failed to prevail in the end."

[Mr. Brown rose to explain that he had no other information on the subject than what he derived from a letter of Mr. Jefferson's to Jared Sparks, in the fourth volume of his correspondence, in which he recognized slaves as property, and declared that where they were taken from the owner by government, adequate compensation must be made.]

MR. RANDOLPH. I know that Mr. Jefferson considered them as property, nor am I aware that they ever have been considered otherwise by any one. Mr. Jefferson fixed the price of the *post nati* at \$12 50 cents, which would indicate the belief of the necessity of a compromise between the holder and the public. The letter which I have just read, is dated August, 1814. It appears, then, that in 1770, 1814, 1824, he still deemed abolition indispensable to the safety of the country. These dreams of his lasted a long time—some sixty years.

I agree with gentlemen in the necessity of arming the state for internal defence. I will unite with them in any effort to restore confidence to the public mind, and to conduce to the sense of the safety of our wives and our children. Yet, sir, I must ask upon whom is to fall the burden of this defence; not upon the lordly masters of their hundred slaves, who will never turn out except to retire with their families when danger threatens. No, sir, it is to fall upon the less wealthy class of our citizens; chiefly upon the non-slaveholders. I have known patrols turned out where there was not a slaveholder among them, and this is the practice of the country. I have slept in times of alarm quietly in bed without having a thought of care, while these individuals owning none of this property themselves, were patrolling under a compulsory process, for a pittance of seventy-five cents per twelve hours, the very curtilage of my house, and guarding that property, which was alike dangerous to them and myself. After all, this is but an expedient. As this population becomes more numerous, it becomes less productive. Your guard must be increased, until finally its profits will not pay for the expense of its subjection. Slavery has the effect of lessening the free population of a country. The wealthy are not dependent upon the poor for those aids and those services, compensation for which enables the poor man to give bread to his family. The ordinary mechanic arts are all practised by slaves. In the servitude of Europe in the middle ages, in years of famine, the poor had to barter their liberty for bread: they had to surrender their liberty to some wealthy man to save their families from the horrors of famine. The slave was sustained in sickness and in famine upon the wealth of his master, who preserved him as he would any other species of property. All the sources of the poor man's support were absorbed by

him. In this country, he cannot become a slave, but he flies to some other country more congenial to his condition, and where he who supports himself by honest labor is not degraded in his caste. Those who remain, relying upon the support of casual employment, often become more degraded in their condition than the slaves themselves.

The gentleman from Petersburg has spoken of the depression which this scheme would produce in the value of slave property. Let us examine his position. No slave now living, or to be born prior to the year 1840, would be at all operated upon by this plan. The young slaves now living, and those to be born prior to 1840, would be in their prime for effective labor, from 1860 to 1870; but this is the period at which those born between 1840 and 1850 are being removed, and labor must become scarce at this moment, until it is supplied by free labor. Is the value of labor diminished by an increased demand for labor? Certainly not. But of necessity enhanced. Then, sir, the value of the young slaves now living, and to be born prior to 1840, who will be held to bondage for life, will be enhanced, because their labor will be in increased demand; but the female slaves, whose offspring after 1840, are prohibited from being kept in the state, will be diminished. They will be diminished in value to retain them, but not to sell them out of the state. They would sell as well for exportation as they did before. We will take the whole subject as a calculation of profit and loss. We know, sir, that if nothing is done towards ultimate abolition, that there are thousands of families in the state ready to abandon it from utter despair of the future. These will throw large bodies of land upon the market; the monied men from the same distrust are not disposed to vest a dollar in land; the inevitable result is an alarming depression in the value of real property: no man can foretell to what extent it will decline. As the tide of emigration flows, those who remain feel themselves more insecure, and become anxious to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before them. These emigrants, warned by ills real or imaginary here, will seek asylums mostly in free states; their slaves will be thrown upon the market in such numbers as to reduce the value of this property also. You have then on one hand, if the hope of abolition should be held out, an increase in the value of your young male slaves, a sustained or an increased value in your landed property, (for lands are always higher in the free, than in slave states,) with a depression in the value of female slaves. On the other, you have the prospect of entire prostration of the value of real estate, and a probable depression of slaves generally: on one hand hope, on the other, despair. The gentleman has spoken of the increase of the female slaves being a part of the profit: it is admitted; but no great evil can be averted, no good attained, without some inconvenience. It may be questioned, how far it is desirable to foster and encourage this branch of profit. It is a practice, and an increasing practice in parts of Virginia, to rear slaves for market. How can an honorable mind, a patriot, and a lover of his country, bear to see this ancient dominion, rendered illustrious by the noble devotion and patriotism of her sons in the cause of liberty, converted into one grand menagerie where men are to be reared for market like oxen for the shambles. Is it

better, is it not worse, than the slave trade, that trade which enlisted the labor of the good and the wise of every creed and every clime to abolish it? The trader receives the slave, a stranger in language, aspect and manner, from the merchant who has brought him from the interior. The ties of father, mother, husband and child, have all been rent in twain; before he receives him, his soul has become callous.— But here, sir, individuals, whom the master has known from infancy, whom he has seen sporting in the innocent gambols of childhood, who have been accustomed to look to him for protection, he tears from the mother's arms, and sells into a strange country among strange people, subject to cruel task-masters. In my opinion, sir, it is much worse. He has compared slave property to a capital in money. I wish it were money, sir, or any thing else than what it is. It is not money, it is labor; it is the labor which produces that of which money is the representative. The interest on money is 4 to 6 per cent. The hires of male slaves is about 15 per cent. upon their value: in ten years or less, you have returned your principal with interest. Thus it is with much of the 100,000,000 of property, the loss of which the gentleman has so eloquently depicted as ruining the country. He has attempted to justify slavery here, because it exists in Africa, and has stated that it exists all over the world. Upon the same principle, he could justify Mahometanism, with its plurality of wives, petty wars for plunder, robbery and murder, or any other of the abominations and enormities of savage tribes. Does slavery exist in any part of civilized Europe? No, sir, in no part of it. America is the only civilized Christian nation that bears the opprobrium. In every other country where civilization and Christianity have existed together, they have erased it from their codes, they have blotted it out from the page of their history. He has attempted to reconcile us to the dangers of negro slavery, by comparison with slavery as it existed among the ancients. There is one view of this subject which has escaped the gentleman, and which I think reverses his conclusions. The slaves of the ancients were of the same species of the human race; they were of different nations it is true, taken in war, but nevertheless white, bearing no distinctive specific mark, stamped upon their countenances, which should designate them through illimitable generations as a distinct race. In the march of events their blood mingled with their masters; all varieties of dialect or language, the slight differences of aspect and countenance became blended into one mass. These, from individual genius and assiduity, from high moral and intellectual qualities, could rise separately into the higher classes. Such was Esop, Phædrus, Narses, Terence, and the father of Juvenal, who have transmitted their names to an immortal posterity, while their proud masters sleep in oblivion with the common herd. To rise by single merit was practicable: there was no inducement to attempt to elevate violently a caste with whom they had no community of interest or feeling. The ancients even forbade badges of slavery to be worn, fearing to mark them too plainly, lest they might see their own strength; and with all this precaution, Italy was ravaged by servile wars. The slave Spartacus kept the field for three years in the heart of Italy, repeatedly defeating consular armies. But, sir, how different is it with the Afri-

can: nature has stamped upon him the indelible mark of his species: no lapse of time or generations, no clime or culture can weaken or obliterate her impression from his countenance. On the burning sands of Africa, in the snowy regions of Canada, as the naked hunter of his native woods, pursuing with the poisoned dart the lion or the elephant, or here, sir, after two hundred years of culture, it remains unfaded, unchanged, and unchangeable. No matter what the grandeur of his soul, the elevation of his thought, the extent of his knowledge, or the purity of his character; he may be a Newton or a Des Cartes, a Tell or a Washington, he is chained down by adamantine fetters; he cannot rear himself from the earth without elevating his whole race with him, to the utter destruction of all above him. Here is the danger; here is the melancholy difference between modern and ancient slavery. The descendants of the European and the African, cannot exist upon the same soil in an equality of condition; one will govern by force, the other will rebel in bloody massacre, to be repressed by the exterminating vengeance of the white man. No one can doubt, sir, but that the power of extermination is now in our hands. Yet none can calculate the actions of brutal ignorance and moral degradation under the impulses of superstition, fanaticism or folly. The gentleman has appealed to the Christian religion in justification of slavery. I would ask him upon what part of those pure doctrines does he rely; to which of those sublime precepts does he advert to sustain his position? Is it that which teaches charity, justice and good will to all, or is it that which teaches "that ye do unto others as ye would they should do unto you?"

[Mr. Newton said, he supposed the gentleman from Albemarle had alluded to some remarks which he (Mr. N.) had made the other day. If his allusion had not been to him, he should not debate the subject; but if he did, he would proceed and offer a few remarks. He had told the gentleman from Petersburg, that after his eloquent speech, he (Mr. N.) would not attempt an argument on the subject: that he would burn his notes and not attempt to add a capital to a perfect pillar.—But if the gentleman from Albemarle had alluded to him, he should take occasion to address the House in a few brief remarks.]

MR. RANDOLPH. The difference between the gentleman from Westmoreland and myself is political. I did not suppose, in his denunciation of democracy the other day, that he had proposed to hang me up on the wall as a scare-crow to all future democrats, as a terror to all evil doers against his own principles. I believed his allusion was to the political opinions I entertained: our political principles are as wide asunder as the poles. I am a democrat; my highest wish would be, to have the name inscribed upon my tomb. He denounces democracy, and would stamp the name of democrat upon the wall as a mark of infamy: here, sir, is the difference between us.

The following is the Letter from which the above extracts were taken :

MONTICELLO, AUGUST 25, '14.

DEAR SIR,

Your favour of July 31, was duly received, and was read with peculiar pleasure. The sentiments breathed through the whole do honor to both the head and heart of the writer. Mine on the subject of the slavery of negroes have long since been in possession of the public, and time has only served to give them stronger root. The love of justice and the love of country plead equally the cause of these people, and it is a mortal reproach to us that they should have pleaded it so long in vain, and should have produced not a single effort, nay I fear not much serious willingness to relieve them and ourselves from our present condition of moral and political reprobation. From those of the former generation who were in the fulness of age when I came into public life, which was while our controversy with England was on paper only, I soon saw that nothing was to be hoped. Nursed and educated in the daily habit of seeing the degraded condition, both bodily and mental, of those unfortunate beings, not reflecting that that degradation was very much the work of themselves and their fathers, few minds had yet doubted but that they were as legitimate subjects of property as their horses or cattle. The quiet and monotonous course of colonial life had been disturbed by no alarm, and little reflection on the value of liberty. And when alarm was taken at an enterprize on their own, it was not easy to carry them the whole length of the principles which they invoked for themselves. In the first or second session of the legislature after I became a member, I drew to this subject the attention of Col. Bland, one of the oldest, ablest, and most respected members, and he undertook to move for certain moderate extensions of the protection of the laws to these people. I seconded his motion, and, as a younger member, was more spared in the debate : but he was denounced as an enemy to his country, and was treated with the grossest indecorum. From an early stage of our revolution other and more distant duties were assigned to me, so that from that time till my return from Europe in 1789, and I may say till I returned to reside at home in 1809, I had little opportunity of knowing the progress of public sentiment here on this subject. I had always hoped that the younger generation receiving their early impressions after the flame of liberty had been kindled in every breast, and had become as it were the vital spirit of every American, that the generous temperament of youth, analogous to the motion of their blood, and above the suggestions of avarice, would have sympathized with oppression wherever found, and proved their love of liberty beyond their own share of it. But my intercourse with them, since my return has not been sufficient to ascertain that they had made towards this point the progress I had hoped. Your solitary but welcome voice is the first which has brought this sound to my ear ; and I have considered the general silence which prevails on this subject as indicating an apathy unfavorable to every hope. Yet the hour of emancipation is advancing, in the march of time. It will come ; and whether brought on by

the generous energy of our own minds, or by the bloody process of St. Domingo, excited and conducted by the power of our present enemy, if once stationed permanently within our country, and offering asylum and arms to the oppressed, is a leaf of our history not yet turned over.

As to the method by which this difficult work is to be effected, if permitted to be done by ourselves, I have seen no proposition so expedient on the whole, as that of emancipation of those born after a given day, and of their education and expatriation at a proper age. This would give time for a gradual extinction of that species of labour and substitution of another, and lessen the severity of the shock which an operation so fundamental cannot fail to produce. The idea of emancipating the whole at once, the old as well as the young, and retaining them here, is of those only who have not the guide of either knowledge or experience of the subject. For, men, probably of any color, but of this color we know, brought up from their infancy without necessity for thought or forecast, are by their habits rendered as incapable as children of taking care of themselves, and are extinguished promptly wherever industry is necessary for raising the young. In the mean time they are pests in society by their idleness, and the depredations to which this leads them. Their amalgamation with the other color produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent.

I am sensible of the partialities with which you have looked towards me as the person who should undertake this salutary but arduous work. But this, my dear sir, is like bidding old Priam to buckle the armour of Hector "*tremantibus ævo humeris et inutile ferrumcingi.*"—No, I have overlived the generation with which mutual labors and perils begat mutual confidence and influence. This enterprize is for the young; for those who can follow it up, and bear it through to its consummation. It shall have all my prayers, and these are the only weapons of an old man. But in the mean time are you right in abandoning this property, and your country with it? I think not. My opinion has ever been that, until more can be done for them, we should endeavor, with those whom fortune has thrown on our hands, to feed and clothe them well, protect them from ill usage, require such reasonable labor only as is performed voluntarily by freemen, and be led by no repugnancies to abdicate them, and our duties to them. The laws do not permit us to turn them loose, if that were for their good: and to commute them for other property is to commit them to those whose usage of them we cannot control. I hope then, my dear sir, you will reconcile yourself to your country and its unfortunate condition; that you will not lessen its stock of sound disposition by withdrawing your portion from the mass. That, on the contrary you will come forward in the public councils, become the missionary of this doctrine truly christian; insinuate and inculcate it softly but steadily, through the medium of writing and conversation; associate others in your labors, and when the phalanx is formed, bring on and press the proposition perseveringly until its accomplishment. It is an encouraging observation that no good measure was ever proposed, which, if duly pursued, failed to prevail in the end. We have proof of this in

the history of the endeavors in the British parliament to suppress that very trade which brought this evil on us. And you will be supported by the religious precept, "be not weary in well-doing." That your success may be as speedy and complete, as it will be of honorable and immortal consolation to yourself, I shall as fervently and sincerely pray as I assure of my great friendship and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON.

EDWARD COLES, Esq.

TO JARED SPARKS.

Monticello, Feb. 4, 1824.

Dear Sir,

I duly received your favour of the 13th, and with it, the last number of the North American Review. This has anticipated the one I should receive in course, but have not yet received, under my subscription to the new series. The article on the African colonization of the people of color, to which you invite my attention, I have read with great consideration. It is indeed a fine one, and will do much good. I learn from it more, too, than I had before known, of the degree of success and promise of that colony.

In the disposition of these unfortunate people, there are two rational objects to be distinctly kept in view. 1. The establishment of a colony on the coast of Africa, which may introduce among the aborigines the arts of cultivated life, and the blessings of civilization and science. By doing this, we may make to them some retribution for the long course of injuries we have been committing on their population. And considering that these blessings will descend to the '*nati natorum, et qui nascentur ab illis,*' we shall in the long run have rendered them perhaps more good than evil. To fulfil this object, the colony of Sierra Leone promises well, and that of Mesurado adds to our prospect of success. Under this view, the Colonization Society is to be considered as a missionary society, having in view, however, objects more humane, more justifiable, and less aggressive on the peace of other nations, than the others of that appellation.

The second object, and the most interesting to us, as coming home to our physical and moral characters, to our happiness and safety, is to provide an asylum to which we can, by degrees, send the whole of that population from among us, and establish them under our patronage and protection, as a separate, free and independent people, in some country and climate friendly to human life and happiness. That any place on the coast of Africa should answer the latter purpose, I have ever deemed entirely impossible. And without repeating the other arguments which have been urged by others, I will appeal to figures only, which admit no controversy. I shall speak in round numbers, not absolutely accurate, yet not so wide from truth as to vary the result materially. There are in the United States a million and a half of people of color in slavery. To send off the whole of these at once, nobody conceives to be practicable for us, or expedient for them. Let us take twenty-five years for its accomplishment,

within which time they will be doubled. Their estimated value as property, in the first place, (for actual property has been lawfully vested in that form, and who can lawfully take it from the possessors?) at an average of two hundred dollars each, young and old, would amount to six hundred millions of dollars, which must be paid or lost by somebody. To this, add the cost of their transportation by land and sea to Mesurado, a year's provision of food and clothing, implements of husbandry and of their trades, which will amount to three hundred millions more, making thirty-six millions of dollars a year for twenty-five years, with insurance of peace all that time, and it is impossible to look at the question a second time. I am aware that at the end of about sixteen years, a gradual detraction from this sum will commence, from the gradual diminution of breeders, and go on during the remaining nine years. Calculate this deduction, and it is still impossible to look at the enterprise a second time. I do not say this to induce an inference that the getting rid of them is forever impossible. For that is neither my opinion nor my hope. But only that it cannot be done in this way. There is, I think, a way in which it can be done; that is, by emancipating the after born, leaving them, on due compensation, with their mothers, until their services are worth their maintenance, and then putting them to industrious occupations, until a proper age for deportation. This was the result of my reflections on the subject five and forty years ago, and I have never yet been able to conceive any other practicable plan. It was sketched in the Notes on Virginia, under the fourteenth query. The estimated value of the new-born infant is so low, (say twelve dollars and fifty cents) that it would probably be yielded by the owner gratis, and would thus reduce the six hundred millions of dollars, the first head of expense, to thirty-seven millions and a half: leaving only the expenses of nourishment while with the mother, and of transportation. And from what fund are these expenses to be furnished? Why not from that of the lands which have been ceded by the very states now needing this relief? And ceded on no consideration, for the most part, but that of the general good of the whole. These cessions already constitute one fourth of the states of the union. It may be said that these lands have been sold; are now the property of the citizens composing those states; and the money long ago received and expended. But an equivalent of lands in the territories since acquired, may be appropriated to that object, or so much at least as may be sufficient; and the object, although more important to the slave states, is highly so to the others also, if they were serious in their arguments on the Missouri question. The slave states, too, if more interested, would also contribute more by their gratuitous liberation, thus taking on themselves alone the first and heaviest item of expense.

In the plan sketched in the Notes on Virginia, no particular place of asylum was specified; because it was thought possible, that in the revolutionary state of America, then commenced, events might open to us some one within practicable distance. This has now happened. St. Domingo has become independent, and with a population of that color only; and if the public papers are to be credited, their Chief offers to pay their passage, to receive them as free citizens, and to pro-

vide them employment. This leaves, then, for the general confederacy, no expense but of nurture with the mother a few years, and would call, of course, for a very moderate appropriation of the vacant lands. Suppose the whole annual increase to be of sixty thousand effective births, fifty vessels, of four hundred tons burthen each, constantly employed in that short run, would carry off the increase of every year, and the old stock would die off in the ordinary course of nature, lessening from the commencement until its final disappearance. In this way no violation of private right is proposed. Voluntary surrenders would probably come in as fast as the means to be provided for their care would be competent to it. Looking at my own state only, and I presume not to speak for the others, I verily believe that this surrender of property would not amount to more, annually, than half of our present direct taxes, to be continued fully about twenty or twenty-five years, and then gradually diminishing for as many more until their final extinction; and even this half tax would not be paid in cash, but by the delivery of an object which they have never yet known or counted as part of their property: and those not possessing the object will be called on for nothing. I do not go into all the details of the burthens and benefits of this operation. And who could estimate its blessed effects? I leave this to those who will live to see their accomplishment, and to enjoy a beatitude forbidden to my age. But I leave it with this admonition, to rise and be doing. A million and a half are within their control; but six millions (which a majority of those now living will see them attain,) and one million of these fighting men, will say, 'we will not go.'

I am aware that this subject involves some constitutional scruples. But a liberal construction, justified by the object, may go far, and an amendment of the constitution, the whole length necessary. The separation of infants from their mothers, too, would produce some scruples of humanity. But this would be straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel.

I am much pleased to see that you have taken up the subject of the duty on imported books. I hope a crusade will be kept up against it, until those in power shall become sensible of this stain on our legislation and shall wipe it from their code, and from the remembrance of man, if possible.

I salute you with assurances of high respect and esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON.



